

Alabama man dies in Hwy. 58 crash

by Cheryl McDermott

A 23-year old Alabama resident was killed in a near head-on collision with a semi-truck and trailer on Highway 58 east of Oakridge Tuesday morning, a crash which sent the man's SUV spinning across the road where it rolled at least once, police said.

A 23-year old Alabama man was killed after his SUV crossed the centerline of Hwy. 58 and crashed nearly head-on with a semi-truck and trailer - OSP photos The trapped driver of the overturned and burning semi-truck and trailer was pulled to safety by the heroic efforts of a passing trucker, Maynard McCaul of Junction City. Oregon State Police (OSP) reported that the Alabama driver, 23, was traveling west on Highway 58 about 12 miles east of Oakridge near milepost 48 about 10:40 a.m., December 11, when the fatal accident occurred. The driver's name is being withheld pending notification of family members.

Investigation determined that the deceased drove a 2002 Nissan Pathfinder and was rounding a sweeping left curve when his SUV crossed into the path of an oncoming 2002 Freightliner pulling a flatbed trailer driven by Jerry Dean Smith, 55, of Monroe.

Smith steered to the right shoulder in an attempt to avoid the SUV, but the two collided “nearly head-on”, sending the Nissan spinning around the north shoulder where it rolled “at least once”, resulting in the death of the driver, troopers said.

The impact overturned the semi-truck and trailer, which caught fire, and Smith was trapped inside the cab of his burning truck, troopers said.

In a heroic effort, a motorist later identified as Maynard M. McCaul, 53, of Junction City “coincidentally another truck driver with the same company as Smith, Doug Hudson Trucking of Monroe -- was following Smith when the accident occurred and quickly kicked out a window and pulled Smith to safety.

Smith was transported to the hospital for evaluation, OSP said.

The investigation is continuing, troopers said, but stated that speed and failure to drive on the right side of the highway were possible contributing factors to the crash. All lanes of traffic were closed for 3 ½ hours, when one lane was reopened. All lane were reopened by 3:30 p.m.

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